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THE

QUALIFICATIONS OF A MINISTER,

WITH SOME REMARKS ON

THE SUBJECT AND MANNER OF PUBLIC TEACHING:

A SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF RELIEF, IN THE RELIEF-CHURCH, EDINBURGH, MAY 15, 1792.

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EDINBURGH:

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1792.

TO

THE MINISTERS OF RELIGION,

AND TO

THE STUDENTS IN DIVINITY, OF ALL DENOMINATIONS;

ESPECIALLY TO THOSE IN CONNECTION WITH THE

SYNOD OF RELIEF;

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

THE

QUALIFICATIONS OF A MINISTER.

A SERMON.

1 TIM. iii. 2.—*Apt to teach.*

IMPORTANT indeed is the office of the holy miniſtry, and many qualifications are neceſſary for its faithful diſcharge. Of far greater moment is this ſacred office than theſe other functions among men, which are uſually more lucrative, and are deemed by many of our race more honourable. The object of a lawyer is worldly good, the province of a phyſician is bodily health, and the work of a ſtateſman is to advance and ſecure temporal benefit: But the deſign of the evangelical miniſtry is to proclaim the

the honour of the bleſſed God, and to lead the children of men to the higheſt perfection of their nature; to make them wiſe, and holy, and happy, in time, and through eternity. The work of the miniſtry is as much elevated above theſe lower functions, as the ſoul is ſuperior to the body, or as eternity is more precious than time. An office, then, converſant with ſuch mighty things, demands that all its public functionaries be duly qualified. This idea bulked ſo much in the eye of our apoſtle, that he is minutely careful to repreſent it in this chapter, and to impreſs it on our hearts.

As it is my province to addreſs you at this time, I ſhall lay before my reverend fathers and brethren a few obſervations that have occurred in reading, in converſation, and in thinking, concerning the qualifications of a miniſter, and reſpecting the ſubject and manner of public teaching. In theſe obſervations, my younger brethren may

may perhaps receive ſome inſtruction; and thoſe of more experience in the miniſtry may feel ſome pleaſure, in recollecting what has often occurred to themſelves.

In general, then, a miniſter of the goſpel ought to be a learned and a good man. More particularly,

In the *firſt* place, an expounder of the ſacred oracles ſhould have ſome acquaintance with ſcience in general. The ſeveral parts of knowledge, like ſo many links in the ſame chain, aid and ſupport one another. If we wiſh to excel in any one ſcience, a conſiderable acquaintance with ſeveral others muſt be duly cultivated. Beſides, general knowledge expands and liberalizes the mind; while attention to a few ideas only narrows and contracts the ſoul. The moſt liberal of our race poſſeſs the moſt extenſive information; while narrowneſs of heart always argues a very limited underſtanding. A

character of this kind is exceedingly dangerous. A narrow-minded man is extremely uncharitable; and, in one ſhape or other, much diſpoſed to perſecution. In ſuch hands, a difference in phraſeology merely, or a ſmall variation in ſome point of mere ſpeculation, or of little importance, will produce diſcord, diviſion, and miſchief, in the church of God.

Secondly, A miniſter of the altar ſhould bend his principal attention to biblical learning. The ſcriptures ought to be frequently read, and ſtudied much, in their own language. This appears the more neceſſary, as a certain peculiarity characteriſes the ſacred ſtile. As the beſt way of underſtanding the peculiar language of Homer is to be familiar with himſelf; ſo the moſt proper method of ſtudying the ſcriptures is to be intimately acquainted with the words, with the phraſes, with the form of ſentences, and with the turn of writing, peculiar to

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the ſacred penmen. A man may be qualified to read the Greek claſſics, and yet not well fitted to underſtand the New Teſtament. The reaſon is obvious: The words and the idiom of this part of the ſacred writings are often ſo different, in meaning and in form, from the profane authors. To have a thorough underſtanding of the Chriſtian revelation, it is neceſſary to be familiar with the New Teſtament itſelf, and with the common language of the Jews, when the Saviour appeared in our world; it is highly proper to cultivate an acquaintance with Helleniſtic Greek, eſpecially with the very uſeful verſion of the Seventy: and it is equally requiſite to ſtudy the Hebrew tongue. The original of the Old Teſtament peculiarizes the language of the Seventy; the language of theſe interpreters characterizes a great part of the New Teſtament; and the idiomatical phraſes of the common Jewiſh dialect appear frequently in the goſpels.

In particular, great is the pleaſure, and many are the advantages, of ſtudying the Old Teſtament original. I am indeed ſorry that this ancient and noble language has fallen into ſo much diſrepute; and that the prejudices of many run ſo ſtrong againſt it, as if it were hoſtile to genius and to taſte. Nothing indeed is more untrue. Would you not think it a ſtrange affirmation, that the man was devoid of taſte, who ſtudied, in their own language, Homer, and Virgil, and Oſſian? And yet the grandeur of ſeveral parts of the Hebrew Scriptures is as much elevated above the moſt admired pieces of theſe exalted geniuſes, as the thunder of heaven is louder than the feeble voice of mortals. Beſides, as the prior revelation of God's will, and the foundation on which the new economy reſts, the Old Teſtament merits the moſt attentive regard. The moment one affirms, that the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue is uſeleſs to a miniſter, on the ſame principle, I will undertake

dertake to prove the inſignificancy of an acquaintance with the Greek language. Indeed, my readers, until more attention is paid to the Hebrew language, and to the ancient verſion of the Seventy, I deſpair of much theological improvement.

As important branches of biblical learning, it is neceſſary to poſſeſs a conſiderable knowledge of the hiſtory of the Jews, and of the neighbouring nations; it is highly proper to be acquainted with the geography of the oriental countries; and it is equally requiſite to be informed of the opinions, the cuſtoms, and the manners, that prevailed in the Eaſt. To the ſtudent in theſe, the fixedneſs of eaſtern manners is a mighty advantage. Owing to ſeveral natural and political cauſes, the ſame cuſtoms are obſerved at preſent which prevailed in the times of Moſes and Abram.

As a powerful motive to all theſe ſtudies, let us remember that much remains yet to be done. Notwithſtanding all the labours of tranſlators and of expoſitors, the way to the temple of knowledge is not yet ſufficiently cleared, and its ſhining portals are not yet fully unfolded. Many parts of the ſacred volume are yet covered with much obſcurity; but the remaining darkneſs, like the ſhades of night before the approaching ſun, muſt fly away. Knowledge, ſays the Scripture, ſhall increaſe. If, then, we poſſeſs a ſpark of laudable ambition, let our talents be vigorouſly employed to enlighten and to recommend the holy oracles. In this exalted ſervice, let us mount up with wings as eagles, let us run and not weary, let us walk and not faint.

Thirdly, Under this head may be claſſed a proper attention to theological ſyſtem. But here extremes muſt be carefully avoided. In ſome former ages, there was a rage for theory;

theory; but now ſyſtem is by many abandoned. Of the utility of a proper ſyſtem there can be no doubt. Let this be illuſtrated by a common optical experiment. We have perhaps all ſeen a painted board, having the colours thrown on it apparently at random, and conſequently no obvious marks of figure or deſign. When a cylindrical mirror is placed in a proper poſition, the diſperſed parts arrange themſelves, and an elegant form is reflected, compoſed with the niceſt ſymmetry, and adorned with all the beauty of colouring. To an unſkilful reader, the holy ſcriptures may appear ſomething like the painted board, without order or deſign. But collect and arrange into ſyſtem; and then, to ſuch an unity of deſign will be more obvious, an harmonious whole, admirable in contrivance, and ſkilful in execution. Great care, however, is requiſite in forming this ſyſtem. A ſyſtem of divinity ought to be formed on the ſame principle with a ſyſtem of natural philoſophy.

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In phyſics, we muſt not invent theories, and, by aſſumed principles, explain the phenomena; but firſt collect facts, then inveſtigate cauſes, and on theſe erect a ſyſtem of nature. In like manner, we muſt not aſſume hypotheſes, and by theſe explain ſcriptures; but firſt ſtudy the ſacred volume, and then arrange it into order. A thoroughly good ſyſtem of theology, formed on this principle, is yet perhaps as much a deſideratum as a good commentary on the whole ſcripture.

Theſe ſentiments ſuggeſt, what I have often conſidered, that the common plans of theological education are extremely defective. Young men are uſually ſet to ſtudy a ſyſtem of divinity, before they have cultivated any conſiderable acquaintance with the ſacred ſcripture. What is the neceſſary conſequence? Unqualified to judge for themſelves, they are prepared to imbibe every idea of the ſyſtem-maker, whether true or falſe,

falſe, whether right or wrong. Accordingly, multitudes of youth enter into holy orders, having their brains crammed with ſyſtematic ideas; while they diſcover the groſſeſt ignorance of the language and meaning of the ſacred records. Agreeable to this aſſertion, we find many things taught from the pulpit, and iſſued from the preſs, without any proof; and it is very common to ſee ſcriptures adduced as evidence, which have no connexion with the point in hand. When a proof is attempted, the language of ſcripture is frequently preſſed into the ſervice; and, like a ſuſpected criminal put to the torture, is forced to ſay any thing.

To remedy theſe defects, would it not be a more eligible plan, to confine, for ſome time, the ſtudies of young men to the ſacred books; to introduce them into an acquaintance with their phraſeology, and with their deſign; and then to lay before them a well connected epitome of divine truth? In

this way, the diſciple would be prepared to go along with his maſter, and to judge of the path which he is treading. Purſuing this method, the ſtudious youth will feel a growing reliſh for the inſpired volume; will be diſpoſed to believe nothing in religion but what it plainly teaches; and, when he commences a public inſtructor of his fellow-men, he will not put them off with bare affirmations, nor attempt to prove, with the mere ſound of ſcripture-language, unleſs the ſenſe is clearly in his favour. Searching diligently the holy oracles, his buſineſs will be to regale the ſouls of men with the unerring wiſdom of God; not with the uſeleſs or hurtful inventions of mortals.

Were all the miniſters of religion thus qualified, and thus diſpoſed, there is every reaſon to hope that, under God, knowledge and true goodneſs would flouriſh like the palm-tree, and would ſpread their roots as the lofty cedars of Lebanon. Another obvious

vious advantage would not fail to bleſs the world: more union of ſentiment would undoubtedly prevail, and more harmony of affection would adorn and felicitate the ſons of men. What is the cauſe of ſo much jarring, in opinion and in practice, among men profeſſing the ſame religion? One grand cauſe is, conſulting the creeds of a party, more than the infallible declarations of heaven. Were the ſcriptures more ſtudied, by miniſters and by people, there would be more knowledge, more unity, more forbearance, and more true goodneſs.

Without a conſiderable acquaintance with general ſcience, without an extenſive knowledge of biblical learning, and without much attention to theology as a ſyſtem, no man can be an accompliſhed miniſter. It is one thing to pleaſe the multitude; it is another matter to be a well qualified expounder of the divine oracles. A few common topics, and a few hackneyed phraſes, may ſatisfy

ſatisfy the thoughtleſs vulgar; but more ſolid, more extenſive, and more laborious accompliſhments, are requiſite to edify and to pleaſe the intelligent and the good.

Beſides, without theſe attainments, no man can be an accompliſhed Chriſtian orator. Extenſive knowledge, in connexion with a virtuous and a tender heart, is one of the firſt requiſites in true oratory. A decent figure, a graceful action, a melodious voice, and a well turned period, may give you the tinſel of elocution; but theſe exterior qualifications, without many ideas, and without much goodneſs, can never preſent the Sterling gold of eloquence. But ſo little diſtinction is made between the matter and the manner of an orator, that many are more captivated by ſound and ſhow, than by the moſt important ſentiments. Modeſt and unaffected worth is often deſpiſed; while hypocritical grimace

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and foppiſh impudence are as frequently extolled to the ſkies.

Once more here: A miniſter of religion ought to be a good man. No order of men have need to be more jealous of themſelves than the miniſters of the goſpel. There is ſomething in our office which may have no ſmall tendency to ſelf-deceit. That aſſiſtance, afforded us in our great Maſter's work, is often conſidered by the people as an evidence of the goodneſs of our ſtate; and may lead ourſelves to form a better opinion of our ſpiritual condition than is either reaſonable or ſafe: and therefore, as one obſerves, we have the greater need to look frequently and narrowly into our hearts, leſt the gifts, which we receive for the uſe of the church, ſhould paſs with us for theſe peculiar graces of the Spirit, which prove our adoption into the family of God, and manifeſt our title to the heavenly inheritance.

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Beſides, unleſs a miniſter be careful of his own ſalvation, how can he be duly concerned about the happineſs of others? He muſt be a poor keeper of the vineyards, who would ſay, if he ſpoke the truth, mine own vineyard have I not kept. An unfaithful miniſter of the Divinity is more to be dreaded than the fierce lion of the deſart. In his terrible excurſions, the ſavage animal may deſolate the plain, and lay waſte the habitations of mortals; but the unrighteous ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt may deceive immortal ſouls into the dire abodes of everlaſting woe. Is it poſſible, in the nature of things, that an ungracious miniſter can be active? Yes; he may. A man of vain ambition may ſtrain his powers, in order to catch the empty bubble of popular applauſe; and the worldly-minded may exert himſelf to advance or ſecure his living. But ſtill the grand object of ſuch a miniſter muſt be, rather to pleaſe the multitude than to afford uſeful inſtruction; and, in the preſent ſtate

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of human nature, theſe diſcourſes, if I miſtake not, which are often the moſt pleaſing, are ſeldom the moſt edifying. If I yet pleaſed men, ſays an apoſtle, I ſhould not be the ſervant of Chriſt *. Wo unto you, cries our Saviour, when all men ſhall ſpeak well of you; for ſo did their fathers to the falſe prophets †. On the other hand, the moſt neceſſary and the moſt uſeful ſermons are frequently the leaſt acceptable. The reaſon, I am afraid, is too obvious. If the greater part of mankind be neither wiſe nor good, can fools reliſh wiſdom, or will the unjuſt be pleaſed with righteouſneſs? The underſtanding, indeed, may be forced to approve; but the heart will certainly revolt. Will a diſhoneſt perſon be enamoured of a diſcourſe on reſtitution, and on ſtrict equity? Will the hateful liar be pleaſed with a ſermon on the baſeneſs of falſehood? Or will the deteſtable hypocrite ſincerely applaud an oration on integrity of character?

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* Gal. i. 10. † Luke, vi. 26.

In a word, will the impure ſenſualiſt behold with pleaſure the beauties of holineſs? Or will the baſe worldling highly reliſh a juſt deſcription of the holy exerciſes and refined enjoyments of immortality? They may; when the ſun riſes in the weſt, or when combuſtibles refuſe to burn.

Goodneſs of character, on the contrary, will direct to thoſe ſubjects of diſcourſe which have the moſt powerful tendency to holy edification; and will enable us to pronounce our ſermons in the beſt manner. Rules of art are certainly uſeful; but the ſource from which all juſt rules on eloquence flow is nature. Let us underſtand, and let us feel to purpoſe; and then, unleſs our manner has been previouſly vitiated, we ſhall ſpeak with propriety and with energy. The man who is fully perſuaded of the truth of what he ſays, and has a deep concern about it, will pronounce with a natural ardor and vehemence, far more lively and affecting

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than all the ſtrains which mere art can dictate.

Add to theſe: A good man will preſent a becoming example. A miniſter of inferior talents, and exemplary conduct, may be more uſeful in the church, than one of ſuperior intellectual qualifications, whoſe converſation is leſs righteous and pure. As a wiſe maſter practiſes before his ſervants; as an affectionate parent exemplifies in the preſence of his children; and as an excellent commander marches on the head of his ſoldiers, leading them to glory and to victory; ſo a gracious miniſter evidences his belief of theſe doctrines which he teaches, and practiſes theſe duties which he enjoins. The language of his holy conduct is, Be ye followers of me, even as I alſo am of Chriſt. In one word, the influence of gracious characters among men will be as the gladdening ſhower of the ſpring, when the earth is renewing her attire; while their own felicity

will be calm and tranſporting, like the untroubled face of the ocean, glittering in the beams of the ſun.—Thus, a miniſter of the New Teſtament ought to be a learned and a good man.

Permit me now to direct your attention a little to the ſubject and manner of public teaching.

Let the goſpel be preached in a plain and ſcriptural manner. The obſcure and entangling philoſophy of Ariſtotle found early admittance into the Chriſtian church; and, in the theology of the ſchools, it bore, for a long time, an abſolute ſway. Even at the cloſe of the eighteenth century, ſcholaſtic jargon is by many half adored; and metaphyſical ſubtleties often paſs current for profound divinity. As the mournful conſequence, inſtead of being edified with plain and uſeful inſtruction, common underſtandings are frequently perplexed and confound-

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ed with nice and uſeleſs diſtinctions. Frivolous diſtinctions are often made, and refined explanations are frequently given, which ſerve to bewilder or to amuſe, but have no tendency to lead into the paths of ſound knowledge and piety. Many theological hair-ſplittings, as they are ſometimes termed, are not unlike the electrical phenomenon called the *ignis fatuus*, that frequently embogues the unwary traveller; while they bear no reſemblance to that uſeful ſtar which conducts the mariner to the deſired haven. But, if we follow the bleſſed Saviour as our guide, or imitate his inſpired apoſtles, we will be as careful to avoid abſtruſe and intricate ſpeculation, as we ſhould be deeply concerned for the wiſdom and goodneſs of our fellow-men. For attaining this important end, matters both of faith and of practice ought to have their juſt weight.

As in all other caſes, ſo here extremes are dangerous. With ſome, every thing about

about faith is of the higheſt importance; while any thing of practice ſavours ſtrongly of legaliſm. With others, practice is all in all; while faith leads to downright antinomianiſm. Both theſe are extremely dangerous. The one is laying a foundation, but building little or nothing upon it; the other is vainly attempting to raiſe a noble edifice on the ſlippery ſand. The truth is, faith, in the great doctrines of revelation, is the potent ſpring, practice is the motion of the ſoul; faith is the healthy fountain, practice is the ſalubrious ſtream; faith is the invaluable tree, and practice is the precious fruit.

The diſſenting intereſt in this country, if I be not miſtaken, has appretiated too highly ſpeculation and belief merely; while the duties of religion are greatly undervalued. Avoiding one extreme, like the vibrations of a pendulum, we have gone, I am afraid, too far to the other. Accordingly, if we conſult the taſte

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of many, we will ſeldom entertain them with the practice of righteouſneſs; but, if we mean their good, we will frequently and faithfully explain the holy law of God; and will fervently inculcate, on evangelical principles, univerſal obedience. The grace of God, which hath appeared unto all men bringing ſalvation, teacheth us and our people, with this great end in view, that, denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Beſides, in preaching the goſpel, let proper texts be choſen. It will not be proper, I believe, to deal with doubtful types; figures ſhould not be ſqueezed; accommodated ſcriptures ſeldom do well; and outre

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paſſages can never anſwer any good purpoſe. Several perſons and things are doubtleſs really typical; but many perſons and things are called types, for which no ſolid reaſon can be found in ſcripture. A lively imagination may trace a fanciful reſemblance between two things, when it was not intended by the Spirit of God that the one ſhould be a type of the other. When a figure is uſed in ſcripture, for illuſtration or for ornament, one great idea only is generally repreſented; or a very few things at moſt are couched under any metaphor or ſimilitude. It never entered into the writer's mind, that either the one or the other ſhould be wire-drawn. An accommodated text ſeldom does well; for this ſtrong reaſon, that it preſents no immediate foundation for the deſigned ſuperſtructure: And an outre paſſage requires all the ſtraining of an extravagant head to force on it the intended ſpiritual meaning. Preaching much on theſe may aſtoniſh the ignorant, and pleaſe the unthinking

thinking multitude; but the preacher, I am doubtful, will not be much improved, nor his audience greatly edified. Our texts ſhould generally be plain and expreſs paſſages, evidently ſupporting and clearly conveying our leading ideas. A text of a different caſt may be called, if you pleaſe, the motto of the ſermon; but ought never to be termed the ſubject of the diſcourſe.

Moreover, the ſtile of a ſermon ſhould be ſuited to the nature of the ſubject, and equal to the capacity of the hearer. An accompliſhed orator will be ſometimes plain and ſimple, ſometimes elegant, ſometimes nervous, ſometimes pathetic, and ſometimes ſublime. All theſe are exemplified by the inſpired writers. Moſes and the Evangeliſts are ſimple and plain, David is elegant, Paul is nervous, Jeremiah is pathetic, and Iſaiah is ſublime. Nay, a great variety of ſtile is found even in the ſame writer. In narration, Moſes is generally ſimple and plain; in

in the affecting and pathetic piece of Joſeph and his brethren, every touch of his maſterly pencil reaches the heart; and, in the triumphal ſong on the banks of the Red Sea, how exalted and ſublime! The Apoſtle of the Gentiles is uſually plain and correct, often uncommonly nervous, and ſometimes riſes to an aſtoniſhing degree of elevation. In his goſpel and epiſtles, the writer of the Apocalypſe is remarkably ſimple; but the ſcenery of this myſterious book is now glorioufly magnificent, and now awfully ſublime. Guided by ſuch excellent, and fired by ſuch noble examples, let the language of our diſcourſes reſemble the plain, the beautiful, the maſculine, the tender, and the majeſtic eloquence of the ſacred writings. In a word, if we wiſh to be eminent in compoſition, we muſt underſtand our ſubject, be intimately acquainted with the beſt writers, and frequently compoſe with care and attention.

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While attentive to ſtile, be duly ſolicitous about good matter. The importance of this advice ſhould grow upon us, in this age eſpecially, which is verging ſo faſt to an effeminate finery of diction. Our language is reſembling our dreſs, our furniture, and our equipage. Deſpiſing ſubſtantial beauty, we careſs the glittering toy; overlooking ſolid information, we are pleaſed with gaudy trifles. With reſpect even to a great thought, if you be not ſatisfied with it, till you deck it round and round with glittering ornaments, as is too often done, the beautiful may remain, but the ſublime is gone. Theſe certain marks of a decline of genius remind me of theſe unfortunate periods, when the noble eloquence of Greece and Rome was exchanged for a light and ſparkling ſtile, equally little and turgid.

To theſe ſubjoin a proper attention to manner. In the pronouncing of public diſcourſes, great extremes are conſpicuous.

Some are fixed and motionleſs, like ſtatues; ſome are cold and frigid, as if they were talking of trifles; ſome are ſeen toſſing their arms, like a harlequin; ſome geſticulate as violently as a gladiator; ſome bluſter and roar, like a wild bull in a net; and ſome are beheld waving the handkerchief, as an auctioneer expoſing it to ſale. Want of motion in a preacher, argues a cold indifference; as violent action and extreme vociferation are equally unbefitting the ſacred eloquence of the pulpit. If action have a meaning, it muſt be natural; and if manner be truly graceful, then gravity, and earneſtneſs, and dignity will be combined. In ſhort, the preacher ſhould never forget that the end of his office is to inform the underſtanding; to touch the heart; to move aright all the affections, theſe powerful ſprings of our nature; and to perſuade to holy and righteous conduct. What a glorious field for true oratory! How informing ſhould be the preacher of righteouſneſs, how elegant, how animated,

animated, and how ſublime! Can we be cold and unfeeling, when dealing with immortal creatures, about everlaſting happineſs or miſery? Can we be flat and dull, when diſcourſing of eternal objects? And will we not riſe to the true ſublime, when repreſenting an aſſembled univerſe, the throne of God, the Judge in grandeur, and the world on fire? In fine, a coarſe, a low, and a frigid preacher diſgraces his high profeſſion.

In the courſe of this ſermon, general truths have been delivered; I leave it to my readers to make ſpecial applications. My aim was, to be an inſtructor of the ignorant, a remembrancer to the knowing, an encourager of the good, a corrector of the improper, and a reformer of the vicious.

To bring this diſcourſe now to a concluſion: Behold what reading is neceſſary for the prieſt of the Lord, what thinking, what praying, and what holy circumſpection.

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The attainments, which we have been contemplating, are not to be acquired without much labour and diligence. For this purpoſe, let a virtuous emulation be highly cultivated. The proper object of this noble paſſion is whatever is great and good. Emulation enkindles deſire, and deſire incites to attainment. But, without this exalted virtue, a man will be neither ſtudious nor active, in a right manner: And an unſtudious and unfaithful miniſter are equivalent terms. Let our knowledge of revelation, then, be extenſive and juſt, and our piety ſincere and unaffected. Beware of ſubſtituting grimace, inſtead of real piety; or the ſemblance of virtue, in the place of ſubſtantial godlineſs. With this view, let the approbation of the Moſt High be ſupreme in your eſteem; and may the Son of God be ever dear to your hearts. Let us rejoice in his laws, exult in his example, glory in his croſs, and triumph in his crown. Actuated by theſe godlike

ſentiments,

ſentiments, we will be faithful miniſters and eminent Chriſtians.

But, into our Society, we are in no ſmall danger of receiving men of oppoſite characters. We may expect applications from ſome, who have no intereſt to procure a ſettlement in the national church, or who poſſeſs no real merit, to gain the reſpect of the wiſe and good. It is not my province, in this place, to ſay, that we have not been ſufficiently careful in this important matter; but certainly it is my duty to put you in remembrance. My fellow-labourers, act, I beſeech you, as thoſe that muſt give an account. As ſtewards in the houſe of God, let us be faithful to our momentous truſt; as brethren, let us dwell together in unity. Laying aſide every ſelfiſh, every trivial, every unworthy conſideration, let us harmonize in this great point, the honour of our God, in connexion with the ſalvation of men. Keeping this grand object always in view, inſpect narrowly the character and the accom-

accompliſhments of youth. Lay hands ſuddenly on no man. By the character of our clergy, we will ſtand or fall. If none be admitted among us but learned and good men, the field of our uſefulneſs will be enlarged, and our character ſhall juſtly riſe in the public eſteem. But, if otherwiſe, we will aſſuredly ſink into juſt contempt; our fame ſhall ceaſe in the earth, as ſounds that are no more; and our name be deſervedly blotted out of the church of God.

To ſay no more: Notwithſtanding all the viciſſitudes of the preſent ſcene, a faithful diſcharge of our duty will, by the grace of God, tranquilize the ſeaſon of our mortal exiſtence; will brighten the evening of life; and waft us, with tranſporting joy, into Immanuel's land. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life *. Amen.

* Rev. ii. 10.

THE END.